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March 14, 2021

Just so we are all on the same sheet of music here; Paul had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how the brethren there were doing. It is hard to discern if a message had been sent to Paul in the form of a question about end times or if that question came up to Timothy's on his visit from Athens. It seems likely that the concern came to Paul about continued persecution by some means and in response to that information Paul decided to send Timothy to see how they were all doing.

In either case Paul and likely Silas stayed in Athens while Timothy went to Thessalonica; Paul now responds to the information that Timothy had obtained from Thessalonica and several questions.

1 Thessalonians 3

Timothy's Visit

1Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

The “we” may be Silas and Paul staying there to continue in their preaching which was being met with some contention from the philosophers in Greece.

2And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

Paul in his writings speaks highly of Timothy sometimes as brother other times as his “son”. Timothy was a young man when he committed to Christ and spent a lot of time with Paul, learning and becoming a preacher of the Word himself. Timothy had the ability to comfort believers who were being persecuted, lifting them up concerning their faith.

3That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

Even after Paul had left at the beginning of a riot from Thessalonica those who remained were still at odds with their own countrymen. Anytime we see the prevalent power structure questioned the response is often violent from that local structure.

We will see that more in the future here in America as Socialism/Communism embraced by one part of the political power structure is questioned. That element will undoubtedly

push against any Christian that dares question them just like what happened in Thessalonica.

We are not given many details of the exact persecution as to the how it started and progressed. We know it often started with violence and moved to either killing of the disciple or imprisonment.

4For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

Paul not only spoke from personal experience as to persecution received but also persecution that he delivered. Not only that but when he met Christ, he was told what persecution he would endure for the sake of Christ.

Acts 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

5For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

Paul reveals more of his concern and that was again driven by experience. He was concerned that others had come into their midst and gave false testimony and false teaching. Paul wanted first-hand knowledge of what was going on there.

Timothy's Encouraging Report

6But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

Timothy returned to Paul and Silas with good news as to their continued growth in understanding and charity (Love). Paul was glad to hear that they had a good report as to how they thought of Paul, Silas and Timothy, apparently telling Timothy that they would like to have Paul and Silas come back to them in the future.

7Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Paul is referencing not the affliction that he was experiencing from Thessalonica because Timothy had reported that they were strong in the faith but that which he had endured from Corinthians and the false teachers that had deviated his careful teaching there. Paul declares that he was living as he and they should if they would continue to “stand fast in the Lord”. That same admonition is critical to us in this day as well, becoming more important as we get closer to the Tribulation. Jesus expressed a concern as to “faith” when He returned in the future.

Luke 18:8 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

One prophecy that Jesus told His disciples was about the issue of quasi-believers under pressure from Satan through the world as the time came close for Jesus return.

2 Thesalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

So, based on those two verses it is easy to understand Jesus' trepidation as to whether or not He would find "Faith" upon His return.

9For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

The joy of seeing a person or family or group come to a saving knowledge of Christ is like non other. When we see a family member come to Christ after years of being at odds with God it is one of the most joyous times in our lives.

10Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Paul ever the teacher, desiring to help those whom He led to Christ to grow in "faith" the Lord. The perfecting of a person's faith

is what we understand to be “sanctification”. That is a lifelong process, but growth is obvious to those around us sometimes even before we observe it in our own lives. None of us have reached the pinnacle of faith in our own lives, it is a growing in Faith that seems to never cease. When we think we have complete “Faith” often events occur that test that faith and many times we might get the feeling that we just don’t possess enough “Faith”. It is those time that our Faith is stretched that we grow in Faith.

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

A truth we have discussed and learned is that anything to do with operating in the Faith that if not directed by God is often futile. Paul makes this point by declaring that they were seeking God’s direction for the disciple’s way to help the Thessalonians grow in Faith. Efforts made in the flesh to help people grow is usually ineffective and may even cause damage. It is critical that we rely on God’s direction in our lives as to how to not only self-growth (sanctification) but reaching out to those searching.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you:

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

This verse was predicated on Jesus teaching His disciples and in turn us the most important things in our lives. Charity is “Love”.

1 Corinthians 13:1 1Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Faith appears to be a basic principle in growing to a point of being able to love the unlovable. We think of those who seem to hate God, turn from anything that has to do with God and we are instructed to “love” them. To love someone who hates what we love is a challenge and we find solace and strength in praying for them. We may never speak the words either due to not having the opportunity or being rejected by the one we hoped to speak to but in Faith we can love them and pray for them. It is necessary to leave it in God’s Hands, and asking that God’s Will would be done in those lives that we pray for.

13To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Here again this is speaking of “sanctification”. Paul is praying that God would firm up in their hearts that they were forgiven; “unblameable” in God’s own holiness. As we have discussed many times as believers there is two tenses of Sanctification; sanctified and sanctification. Upon surrendering to Christ and being Born Again we are Sanctified in God’s eyes (completed-past tense) being made and recognized by God as Holy. As we walk out our Faith and we see growth in our Faith and Love, our sanctification is a process of being made Holy. It is a lifelong process but we need to remember that in God’s eyes, we are already Sanctified by the Blood of His Son and our Faith in Him as the Son of God and that His blood is sufficient.

Also, here Paul is just touching on Christ’s return which is one of the focal points this letter. The Thessalonians were interested in learning more about this the end times and Christ’s return.

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